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ABSTRACT

This article reports on an analysis of the coverage of the National Front (NF) and other overt forms of white racism in all British daily national and two local papers between 1976 and 1978. The relationship of this coverage to other race-related topics and to the overall racial framework of news items is shown. News topics were coded and analyzed to identify types of materials and the contexts of frameworks in which they are situated. Newspaper readers were interviewed to gather data on their perceptions. Findings indicated that the press emphasizes the problems created by black presence in Britain. Findings also revealed that the NF has had an indirect impact on political and public opinion on race relations by giving momentum to an ideological shift to the political right. The legitimate status conferred on the NF by the press has encouraged this shift. An analysis of readers' perceptions of press coverage revealed that the press can be most effective in conveying an anti-NF stance by highlighting the Nazi and violent image of the party and by diffusing this through the wider public. (Author/MK)

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Reporting Racism: The National Front and
'White Hostility' in the British Press ⁽¹⁾

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Starting with the basic premise that the press and the media are committed to a particular viewpoint, it is not hard at all to see why the National Front gets the treatment it does. The short answer to your question, "Do we get fair treatment from the national press or media?", the answer to that is quite simply, no, we do not ... the facts are self-evident. The National Front has been subjected to the most concentrated, most vitriolic campaign of political assassination in British political history.

(Anthony Reed-Herbert; Organiser of the Leicester Branch of the National Front: Personal Interview, March 1979)

The infusion of black ethnic minority groups into Britain during the last thirty years has brought to the surface racist values which are deeply rooted in the national culture. Quite simply, racism is both a normal and pervasive cultural assumption in Britain and as I have argued elsewhere, "the settlement of coloured colonials in this country has merely provided a more convenient and obvious scenario for its expression" (Troyna, forthcoming (a)). This is not to say that all white Britons explicitly endorse a racist ideology; however, evidence drawn from a variety of studies into the racial attitudes of the white majority has shown conclusively that the beliefs that too many coloured immigrants have been allowed to settle in Britain and, that they are a problem pervade the society and are independent of residential proximity to blacks or any other particular material or structural context (Husbands 1979; 155).

During the 1970s, racism has found political expression in the National Front (NF). In terms of both electoral performance and membership, the NF is the most cohesive of the Radical Right movements currently operating in Britain. It was formed in 1967 by the amalgamation of various extreme right-wing groups in Britain, all of which embraced virulent racist and anti-semitic ideologies (Nugent 1977; Walker 1977). The ideology of the NF is essentially Nationalist with the aim being to establish in Britain "a government faithful to British Nationalist principles". This ideology is predicated on a critique of Britain's development as a multi-racial society, its participation in the EEC and other international fraternities such as NATO and the United Nations, and its commitment to an international monetary system. Cumulatively, according to NF ideology, these have led to Britain's decline as a major world power and, the erosion of national sovereignty. The ultimate aim of the NF is the reinstatement of Britain as a major power. Clearly, however, the concept of racial purity is central to NF ideology and both John Tyndall, Chairman of the NF and Martin Webster, the party's National Activities Organiser, have admitted that the appeal to 'gut feelings' and the encouragement of race-hated are fundamental to the recruitment of NF adherents:

... if the British people are destroyed through racial inter-breeding, then the British nation will cease to exist. If we cannot get that message through to the British people then all other policies, no matter how important they are in themselves, will be utterly meaningless and irrelevant.
(Webster in Spearhead, NF magazine, July 1975)

Currently, there are 231 branches of the NF in Britain (Sunday Telegraph, 2nd October 1977) while the most recent estimates of membership range from 13,000 (The Observer, 11th September 1977) to

approximately 4,000 - 5,000 (Nugent 1977: 176) although this latter estimate does not take into account former National Party (NP) members who may have joined the NF after their own party's disbandment in 1977. Since 1967, when membership was estimated at 2,500, levels have tended to fluctuate quite dramatically so that, as Martin Walker has written, membership of the party "is like a bath with both taps running and the plughole empty. Members pour in and out" (Walker 1977: 9). So far, however, there is very little individual level survey data about the types of people who sympathize, support or join the NF, although what is available suggests that NF affiliation and sympathy is concentrated amongst the "young, ungifted and white"; that is, working class people with the least formal education (Harrop and Zimmerman 1977; Troyna, forthcoming (b); Weir 1978). Existing results also suggest that racial attitudes are the main factors distinguishing between pro and anti-NF sympathizers.

In terms of electoral support, the NF is England's fourth largest political party. Nevertheless, it is important to note that on only one occasion has an NF candidate managed to secure above 12.5 per cent of the vote - thereby saving his £150 deposit,⁽²⁾ and that at the 1979 General Election the 303 NF candidates polled only 191,706 votes, 1.3 per cent of votes cast in seats contested. In this sense then, Steed is correct in pointing out that the electoral performances of the NF are little better than those of earlier Radical Right movements (e.g. League of Empire Loyalists; National Labour Party and the British National Party) in the same areas, and that the NF's electoral threat to the Main political parties may be more apparent than real (Steed 1978).

Since its inception, NF leaders have seen the media as an essential tool in the party's expansion. In 1972 for instance,

Martin Webster wrote that because of the "unwillingness" of the press "to give fair coverage to the policies of movement" it would be necessary "to hit the headlines as often as possible by all manner of demonstrations, marches and stunts" (cited in Walker 1977: 88). Similarly, when questioned about the party's forfeited deposits in the 1974 General Election, Webster said: "We are laughing all the way to the bank. Where else can you get simultaneous five minute broadcasts on the BBC and ITV for thirteen and a half grand?" (The Guardian; 12th October 1974).

This article reports an analysis of coverage of the NF and other overt forms of white racism in all daily national and two local papers between 1976-1978 and will show the relationship of this material firstly to other race-related topics and secondly, to the overall 'racial framework' of news items.⁽³⁾ What I wish to argue here is that, (a) the emergence and perceived electoral advances of the NF have given momentum to an ideological shift to the Right which is both reflected and amplified in the press and, (b) while editorial comments on NF policies are unanimously condemnatory, the press upholds their 'freedom' to articulate these policies, thereby conferring credibility on the party and its political ideology. Finally, I will provide some indication of how readers perceive NF-related material in their daily national and local press and suggest ways in which the press can most explicitly declare an anti-NF position to its readership.

The coding schedule used here derives from that designed by Hartmann and his colleagues in their analysis of race-related material in four daily national papers between 1963-1970 (Hartmann, Husband and Clark 1974) and allows not only for the identification of the types of material but also the contexts of frameworks in which they are situated.

TABLE 1

COVERAGE OF RACE AND NF-RELATED TOPICS

TOPIC	PERCENTAGE OF ALL PAPERS	LOCAL		MIRROR	SUN	MAIL	NATIONAL		GUARDIAN	TELEGRAPH
		LEICESTER	MANCHESTER				EXPRESS	TIMES		
National Front	14.3	16.0	10.4	27.1	7.0	9.2	8.6	15.1	20.7	9.5
Immigration	11.7	7.6	7.5	11.4	7.0	15.4	19.0	18.0	7.2	11.9
Crime	10.7	16.8	11.9	2.9	7.0	10.8	12.1	5.8	7.2	17.5
Human Interest/Normal	10.3	12.2	29.9	8.6	21.1	13.8	13.8	2.9	2.7	5.6
Race Relations	6.9	9.9	4.5	8.6	10.5	4.6	3.4	5.8	6.3	7.1
'Other'	6.6	5.3	9.0	2.9	10.8	10.8	10.3	7.9	3.6	7.9
White Hostility	6.3	4.6	10.4	11.4	10.5	4.6	6.9	1.4	8.1	5.6
Cultural Differences	4.2	6.9	1.5	4.3	-	4.6	-	3.6	8.1	4.0
Education	3.5	3.1	1.5	-	-	4.6	-	5.8	8.1	3.2
Enoch Powell	3.5	0.8	-	4.3	12.3	4.6	5.2	4.3	1.8	3.2
Housing	3.0	2.3	-	2.9	10.5	3.1	3.4	2.2	3.6	2.4
Discrimination	2.9	1.5	-	1.4	-	-	1.7	6.5	7.2	2.4
'Racial Integration	2.1	3.1	3.0	-	-	-	5.2	2.2	0.9	3.2
Employment	1.8	1.5	-	-	1.8	1.5	-	5.0	0.9	2.4
Legislation	1.8	0.8	1.5	2.9	1.8	3.1	1.7	1.4	1.8	2.4
Numbers	1.7	-	3.0	1.4	1.8	1.5	-	2.2	3.6	1.6
Celebrities	1.6	-	-	4.3	1.8	-	6.9	1.4	0.9	1.6
Black Hostility	1.5	-	-	5.7	1.8	1.5	1.7	2.2	0.9	0.8
Health	1.2	4.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.8	1.6
Police	1.1	-	1.5	-	1.8	3.1	-	2.2	1.8	-
Immigrant Organisations	1.0	1.5	-	-	1.8	-	-	2.2	0.9	0.8
Anti Nazi League	1.0	-	4.5	-	-	-	-	1.4	-	2.4
Sport	0.7	1.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White Supremacy	0.6	-	-	-	-	3.1	-	-	1.8	0.8
Discrimination by Coloureds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Black Power	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL ITEMS	824 (100%)	131	67	70	57	65	58	139	111	126

Overview of Findings:

The distribution of the different race-related topic items are presented in Table 1. The attention accorded white racism (i.e. National Front and 'White Hostility') is clearly demonstrated here, and items classified under these two topic headings account for over 20 per cent of the total material collected over the period. This Table also shows that the press devotes far more attention to the manifestations of racial conflict and tension - as shown by the concentration on the 'National Front', 'White Hostility' and 'Crime' - than on the scarcity of social resources which underlie the reasons for this conflict. In all, items collected under the topic headings, 'Housing', 'Education', 'Health' and 'Employment' comprise only 10 per cent of all pertinent material.

A more comprehensive picture of the way white racism was handled by the press can now be presented by examining the distribution of items amongst specific issues in the topics, 'National Front' and 'White Hostility'. As Table 1 indicates, items about the 'National Front' received most attention from the press, and Table 2 shows how the 118 NF items were distributed amongst the various issues.

TABLE 2

NATIONAL FRONT ISSUES

<u>ISSUE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>% OF NF ITEMS</u>
Repatriation	1	0.8
Racist comment/policy	5	4.2
Other part of policy	7	5.9
NF in local election campaign	6	5.1
NF in by-election campaign	10	8.5
NF and the General Election	3	2.5

TABLE 2 (contd)

<u>NATIONAL FRONT ISSUES</u>		
<u>ISSUES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>% OF NF ITEMS</u>
NF as legitimate party	6	5.1
NF as non-legitimate party	2	1.2
"Mainstream" opposition to the NF	31	26.3
"Extremist" opposition to the NF	10	8.5
NF and the media	4	3.4
NF - general	<u>33</u>	<u>28.5</u>
TOTAL	<u>118</u>	<u>100</u>

Clearly, the NF was treated in a very diffuse way and this proved difficult for categorisation of items. The types of stories classified under the issue "NF-General" included a wide range of items such as objections to the establishment of new NF headquarters in London; the NF activist in Bristol who defected from the Party after hearing a Papal Address by Pope John Paul I; the survey by two students which claimed to show an increase in NF support, and various attacks on NF members. Without doubt, the largest group of items collected under this issue related to the actual and intended involvement of the NF in various demonstrations, rallies and marches. These took place in different parts of the country including Bradford, Haringey (both 1976), Lewisham, Birmingham, Greater Manchester, Ilford and, at a meeting of Conservatives at Lambeth Town Hall (all during 1977), and Birmingham (1978). All of these were widely reported in the press. Within our sample period 1977 was the peak of NF agitational activities as shown by the recurrent and provocative marches into areas of concentrated black

and Jewish settlement, and by the inception of a campaign to recruit schoolchildren into the party. During this year, 63 NF-related items were collected - that is 54 per cent of the total number of NF items and over 23 per cent of the total amount of material for that year. Many of these stories reported instances of NF provocation and agitation and the following, chosen from the overall period, are only a few examples of the headline coverage which these activities attracted:

Armed Vigilante Plan from the National Front (Daily Mail 5th August 1977)

Front Demo at Heath Meeting (The Daily Telegraph, 4th November 1977)

Police Chief Refuses to Ban March by the NF (The Times, 22nd April 1976)

4,000 Police Called Up for Big NF Rally (Daily Mirror, 18th February 1978)

The substantial press coverage given to these activities, and to the National Front's involvement in disturbances at Lewisham and Ladywood in August 1977, clearly demonstrates the truth of Martin Webster's claim that the NF could "kick its way into the headlines".

Opposition to the NF from both extremist and mainstream groups⁽⁴⁾ constituted a third of all NF items. Included in the category of "mainstream opposition" were inter alia, Church spokesmen, the police, Trade Unions (e.g. the NUR and TGWU) and, the Prime Minister. Broadly speaking, this opposition assumed one of two forms; on the one hand, there was verbal condemnation of the NF. For example, under the headline, The 'Menace' of the Front (Daily Mirror, 4th November 1977) there was a report of James Callaghan's denunciation of the NF during a speech in Parliament. On the other hand, there were reports of local Borough Councils and Authorities seeking to ban both NF demonstrations - by invoking the

Public Order Act 1936 - and the use of school premises for political purposes. Conversely, reports of "extremist opposition" to the NF generally focused upon physical attacks on NF members, or confrontations between anti-racist groups and Left Wing factions and, the NF. In general condemnation of the NF in editorials and feature articles extended also to the far Left, particularly the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Even the most cursory review of press editorials following the violent confrontations at Lewisham and Ladywood in 1977 shows that 'both sides' were seen as unwelcome participants in British politics. For example, as part of the saturation coverage of Lewisham and Ladywood, Robert Moss wrote in The Daily Telegraph (20th August 1977) under the headline, 'NF and SWP, The Right and Left Feet of Socialism':

In my view, the National Front and the Socialist workers Party resemble each other not only in the violence of their language and behaviour in the streets but also in some of their basic political beliefs ...

and later:

Although they are (literally) at each other's throats over so many things, the NF and SWP are actually on the same side in the profoundest conflict of all. They are both Socialist parties.

Similarly, in an editorial denouncing the NF in general and its campaign to recruit schoolchildren into the party in particular, The Times felt obliged to comment:

The Socialist Workers Party shares with the National Front a desire to subvert established democratic values.
(February 19th, 1977)

In both ~~items~~, the SWP was seen as the "mirror image" of the Front and was portrayed as the main, if not only opponent of the NF.

The remaining items were thinly spread amongst the other NF issues. The majority of these referred to the Party's participation

in local and parliamentary by-elections and its preparations for the, then, forthcoming General Election. As we can see from Table 2, detailed formulations of NF policy were rarely reported in the press although two letters from John Tyndall in response to NF-related articles in the Daily Mirror and The Daily Telegraph were published and provided the opportunity for the dissemination of Front policies and opinions.

To sum up press coverage of the NF is dominated by an emphasis on the Party's agitational activities. Here, reports and editorial comments are unanimously condemnatory of the Party's extremist stance, although there is equal unanimity in the belief that the NF is a legitimate political party and therefore entitled to the rights and privileges conferred on the other parties: it should be allowed to hold meetings, marches and so on. Indeed, press reporting of these activities contrasts sharply with the complaints put forward by the NF in its submission to the Royal Commission on the Press. There, the Party complained that it was often the victim of a "silent treatment" campaign by the press or, when it was reported, was subject to a "propaganda smear" approach. It continued:

One of the worst or indeed the worst aspect of press attitudes towards the right in politics and certainly to this party is the attribution of violence. That violence attends or is threatened at National Front activities is undeniable, but the National Front is not the aggressor.

(NF Submission to the Royal Commission on the Press;
Minutes of Evidence 1975)

Detailed analysis of the press coverage of the NF does not support these claims however. Rather than being subject to a 'silent treatment' campaign, we have shown that the NF receives considerable

attention, in the context of race relations news, during this period. Furthermore, NF activists and supporters are rarely identified as the aggressors in the violence which attends NF activities. For example, after the Lewisham riots in August 1977, under the heading 'Threat of the Left Wing Fascists'; George Gale wrote in the Daily Express:

... the National Front is not committed to the overthrow of Parliamentary institutions. And the great majority of its supporters and members are not fascists. They do not start the fighting; they do not attack the police. (5)

Broadly speaking, the press diverts attention away from the primary causes of this violence - that is, the provocative intrusion into areas which are populated mainly by Jewish or black people - and focuses instead on the consequences of that intrusion. Clearly, the way in which these activities are reported substantiates John Whale's claim that: "Journalists are better at reporting the fact than the matters of protest" (Whale 1971: 48). Given this, it is easy to understand why the extreme Left and the NF are "lumped together" as unwelcome participants in British politics.

The way in which the press neglects to mention the implications of these activities for British race relations can also be explained in these terms.

TABLE 3

WHITE HOSTILITY ISSUES

<u>ISSUE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>% OF WHITE HOSTILITY ITEMS</u>
Assaults by whites	19	36.5
Verbal hostility towards coloured people	7	13.5
Protests against coloured people	1	1.9
Hostile Organisations	16	30.8
White Hostility - general	2	17.3
	<u>52</u>	<u>100</u>

Turning now to items classified under "White Hostility" we can see that racial assaults by whites and hostile racist organisations, other than the NF, tended to dominate the coverage (Table 3). Some interesting differences were found here in the distribution of these issues between the national and two local newspapers. Both local papers concentrated more narrowly on 'Assaults by Whites', an emphasis which is explicable in terms of the local press' emphasis on routinized news such as crime (Jackson 1971). Conversely, the national press focused attention on racially hostile organisations such as Column 88, the National Party and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Regarding racial assaults, the terrorisation and intimidation of Asians and Bengalis in 1977, in Southall and Brick Lane, respectively, attracted most attention.

The 'triumverate' of David Dukes, John Kingsley Read and Robert Relf were the three most prominent and widely reported perpetrators of 'White Hostility' during the sample period. Dukes, a leading member of the KKK, obtained considerable publicity during his visit to Britain in 1978. Kingsley Reed, erstwhile member of the NF and leader of the breakaway National Party also received press attention through his remark "One down, one million to go" after the racial murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar in Southall, London in June 1976. Of the three, Robert Relf attracted most attention by his decision to put up a sign advertising his house for sale to an "English Family" (i.e. white). Throughout the coverage of Relf's trial, his subsequent sentence for contempt of court, and his 45-day hunger strike in jail, there was little attempt to contextualize this latest 'publicity stunt' in terms of Relf's committed and long-standing racist actions. Instead, Relf was portrayed

as "a man of principles" - prepared for imprisonment rather than sacrifice his racist beliefs. He was consistently portrayed as the "Race Rebel", the "Defiant" opponent of the recently established Race Relations Act. The Daily Express, for instance, in its editorial of the 22nd June 1976, considered it more appropriate to criticise this new 'Draconian' law rather than Robert Relf himself. Under the heading, 'SELF-DEFEATING', the Daily Express claimed that Relf "should never have been jailed in the first place" and that his case illustrated "The wrong headedness of trying to outlaw prejudice". That Relf was jailed for contempt of court and not for contravening the new Act was only cursorily referred to in the editorial. Thus, the Daily Express 'glossed' over the fact that Relf was sent to jail not for putting up the sign, but for refusing to take it down. Nevertheless, by concentrating on the issue of "free speech" and Relf's "democratic right" to express what he feels about black people, the Daily Express helped to sustain and reinforce Relf's image as the "Lone Crusader" actively engaged in battle against the attrition of 'freedom'.

The Relationship Between "White Racism" and other Race-Related News Items:

In order to produce a more differentiated and sophisticated picture of the way the press handles various types of race-related material, including 'white racism', it was important to consider the thematic structure of the material and the extent to which categories differed in their attraction of outside reference themes. Put simply, I wanted to distinguish between categories which were dealt with in a self-contained way, with few references to outside themes, and categories placed in a broader framework with frequent reference to outside themes.

Table 4 shows the classification of categories according to the number of outside themes each has attracted and, to their relative importance as either the foreground (Topics) or background (Themes) of news items.

Material falling under the heading "National Front" occupies a particularly interesting position in this classification. It is important both as a topic and outside reference theme, although as a topic it is handled in a very self-contained way. This suggests that while "National Front" material is interjected into press coverage of other race-related matters, this relationship is not reciprocated. Quite simply, the press considers the NF as a pertinent theme to race-related subjects but these subjects are not seen as relevant to "National Front" news items.

The classification also throws up interesting differences between the press treatment of "White Hostility" and "Black Hostility" although because of the slender numerical importance of "Black Hostility" any discussion about these differences must be tentative rather than conclusive. Even so, Table 4 shows that "White Hostility" tends to be in the foreground of news items - that is, the main subject matter of stories - but, it is sustained in a narrow frame of reference, rarely attracting race-related themes as background. This tends to substantiate an earlier finding which suggested that "White Hostility" exists outside the framework of race news; instead, discussions focus on issues such as 'democracy', the erosion of freedoms and, violence; often the implications of these forms of white racism for race relations in Britain were only cursorily referred to. On the other hand, news items about "Black Hostility" were placed firmly within a broad framework of race-related matter. When "Black

TABLE 4

CLASSIFICATION OF TOPICS BY TYPE
OF OCCURRENCE AND TYPE OF HANDLING

How They Occur

How They Are Handled

	<u>Within A Broad Frame of Reference (i.e. with frequent reference to other topics)</u>	<u>Within a Narrow Frame of Reference (i.e. with little reference to other topics)</u>
Important as both Topics and Themes:	Immigration Race Relations* (Racial Integration)*	National Front*
Mainly used as Topics:		Crime* Human Interest/Normal* Education Powell White Hostility (Celebrities)
Mainly used as Themes:	Discrimination Legislation Numbers (Black Hostility)*	Health Cultural Differences Employment Housing

* = Topic Categories with a distinctly broad or narrow frame of reference

() = Topic Categories whose numerical importance is slight

Hostility" formed the main subject of news items, the consequences of these actions for race relations in Britain were readily introduced. In sum then, it would appear that the press sees "Black Hostility" as pertinent to, and seriously affecting race relations, while "White Hostility" and the "National Front" are not.

Although Table 4 provides a broad overview of the relationship between topics and outside themes, it does not give precise details of the association between particular topics and themes. To obtain this I replicated the method developed by Hartmann and his colleagues and identified 'outside' themes which appeared in more than 10 per cent of items falling under any single topic heading. Chi-square tests were then applied to establish the statistical significance of each association (Table 5).

Concentrating once again on the two categories of white racism we can see from Table 5 the impact which the emergence and perceived electoral advance of the NF has had on press discussions of 'race relations' in general. For instance the analysis shows that 'repatriation' has emerged as a central issue in the immigration debate, as reported in the press. This has replaced the concern with 'Numbers' which other analysts identified as the defining theme of the immigration debate in the 1960s (cf. Critcher et al 1977, Hartmann et al 1974). It would seem that the 'growth' of the NF, has rendered certain racist and formerly extreme Right Wing views more acceptable in political and public debate in the 1970s. In the context of NF proposals for compulsory repatriation, the notion of voluntary repatriation appears moderate and is now openly discussed in debates about immigration. So, what were formerly unacceptable notions about 'race relations' have now become incorporated into mainstream political and public debate. The political importance of the NF may

TABLE 5

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN TOPICS AND OUTSIDE THEMESTOPIC

HOUSING	- Segregation of coloured people from whites **
EDUCATION	- Language difficulties **
HEALTH	- None
EMPLOYMENT	- Education (general)
NUMBERS	- Future threat of coloured immigrants
	- Immigration (general) **
	- Powell on immigration/repatriation
DISCRIMINATION	- Employment (general) *
	- Commission for Racial Equality
RACIAL INTEGRATION	- Immigration control
	- Race Relations (General Comment) **
	- White Verbal Hostility **
CRIME	- None
HUMAN INTEREST/NORMAL	- None
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES	- Education (general) *
CELEBRITIES	- None
IMMIGRATION	- Repatriation as a solution to the 'numbers problems' **
LEGISLATION	- Immigration control **
	- Mainstream opposition to the National Front
RACE RELATIONS	- None
WHITE HOSTILITY	- Housing for whites only **
	- Discrimination **
BLACK HOSTILITY	- Bad relations with the police
	- NF advocating repatriation
	- Powell referring to immigration/repatriation
NATIONAL FRONT	- None
ENOCH POWELL	- None
OTHER	- NF as a legitimate party **
	- NF and by-elections **
	- NF and extremist opposition *

* = Association is significant beyond 0.05 level

** = Association is significant beyond 0.01 level

Because of low numbers, "Police", "Immigrant Organisations", "Black Power", "White Supremacy", "Anti-Nazi League", "Discrimination" and "Sport" were omitted from this table.

also partly account for the declining visibility of Enoch Powell in race-related news. His views on race, so central in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Hartmann et al 1974; Seymour-Ure 1974) only appeared under two other topic headings - "Numbers" and "Black Hostility" - and even here these relationships were not statistically significant. I would suggest that his views on race, which appeared so extreme ten years ago, have now become so widely accepted as to render them respectable in the present political climate. Given this, there is little need to bring him into the debate.

As a topic, the NF did not attract a statistically significant number of any one theme; as an outside reference theme, it was tenuously associated with both "Legislation" and "Black Hostility" and most closely rated to "Other". This latter topic heading consisted primarily of items relating to the consequences of the disturbances at the NF's parliamentary by-election meeting at Ladywood, Birmingham (August 1977). In this sense then, it would seem that the relationship made between racism and the NF by the press is subordinate to the conception of the party as a threat to established social norms and values. Put simply, the NF is seen more in terms of a threat to the "British way of life" than to the welfare of black people in Britain, a point typified in The Daily Telegraph editorial on the Lewisham confrontation (August 15th 1977). "Nor can native born Englishmen properly be denied the right to march through a part of their capital MERELY BECAUSE it is settled by immigrants" (emphasis added). In this sense then, the reporting of the NF and other forms of white racism are essentially the same. What is emphasised in these reports is the need to maintain legitimate values such as democracy, freedom and law and order; it is these, rather than race-related issues which

form the conceptual framework in which these items are situated.

Public Perceptions of NF-Related News

Of course, prevailing media conceptions of the NF tell us nothing about public perceptions to the party; simply, we cannot adduce media content as evidence of its effect on an audience. On the whole, the majority of readers of all daily national newspapers interviewed in the research considered their daily national paper to be anti NF. Accompanying comments showed that most readers believed that the NF was outside the consensus politics of the daily national press. A Sun reader, for example, claimed that "the National Front is too much against the accepted for the Sun" while a reader of the Daily Express suggested that national papers could not "afford" to be "racially hostile" or "for the Front". Further probing indicated that the anti-NF stance of the national press had been made most explicit not by the absence of NF-related items but by emphasising its agitational activities and, more importantly, the direct links between the cultural and intellectual notions of the NF and those of the Nazi Party and Mosley's British Union of Fascists.

Most of the papers are against the National Front. They liken it unto the Nazis. Hitler wanted to get rid of the Jews, the NF want to get rid of the coloureds - that's what the paper says anyway. (Daily Express reader)

All these demonstrations they tell you about. They don't want Nazi style politics in this country.
(Daily Mirror reader)

They've stated it in the paper that they're against the National Front. When Mosley had his Blackshirts in this country, it's more or less the same problem again.
(Sun reader)

In many ways, these findings are consistent with the National Union of Journalists Guidelines on how racist organisations like the NF should be reported in the media. Here, the NUJ recommend that rather

than suppress or censor NF-related news, journalists should "seek to publish or broadcast material exposing the myths and lies of racist organisations and their anti-social behaviour" (MacShane 1978: 23). Related to these findings is that readers of the local press failed to perceive any difference between the coverage of the NF and that of other political parties. Claims that "the Mercury just reports all the parties in the same way" and that the "National Front" is covered "in an unbiased way" were fairly representative of the belief that the perceived political impartiality of the Leicester Mercury and to a lesser extent the Manchester Evening News was seen to extend and include the racist politics of the National Front.

Conclusions

The content analysis findings summarised here show the picture of white racism, and its relationship to other race-related material, as reported by the national daily and two local newspapers between 1976-1978⁽⁶⁾. To some extent, the analysis has revealed some important consistencies with earlier studies of the way the press reports race relations in Britain. For example, the image of black people as a problem to the society has been sustained with the prevalence in both overt and covert forms, of such notions as "threat", "conflict" and "problem" forming the 'leitmotif' of this coverage. During the 1960s, however, the press devoted most attention to the question of 'Immigration' and, more specifically the control of 'coloured' immigration to Britain. As Hartmann and his colleagues commented: "Immigration as portrayed in the press is not simply a matter of coloured people coming to settle in this country, it is more centrally a matter of keeping them out" (1974: 127-8). Since then, press treatment of blacks has tended to

shift from a concern with their position as an external threat to the society, to the "outsider within" conception of black people. That is, there has been a progressive convergence of attention on the problems which are seen to have stemmed from the black presence. The role of press reporting of white racism has helped to substantiate this conception. Those reports are couched in terms of increasing restrictions on the freedom of speech, the freedom of assembly and to march, the freedom of appointing workers and in selling property. As the Daily Express put it in the editorial on Robert Relf mentioned above: "A lot of people believe that Mr. Relf should be free to sell his house to whoever (sic) he chooses ... You cannot stop Mr. Relf thinking as he does so why stop him saying what he thinks". According to the Daily Express, then, the development of a multi-racial society should not lead to the attrition of freedoms, a point which had also been made by The Observer, two years earlier in its editorial comment on the Red Lion Square demonstration:

However detestable in a multi-racial society the views of some extreme right wing organisations might be, they are still entitled to the same freedoms as the rest of us.

(The Observer, 23rd June 1974)

These editorials exemplify how the press sees the relationship between white racism and 'race relations'; simply, the racist activities of members of the white majority have no relevance to the development of race relations. On the other hand, the development of a multi-racial society is seen to have had a deleterious effect on the white majority in terms of 'freedoms' and 'democracy'. In this sense then, the press emphasises the problems created by the black presence in Britain.

The Analysis has also revealed the indirect impact of the NF on political and public opinion on race relations and the way this

is reported in the press. The emergence and growth of the NF, and the legitimate status which has often been conferred upon it by the news media has given momentum to an ideological shift to the Right. The emergence of 'repatriation' as a key theme in press discussions of race relations substantiates Michael Billig's claim that the NF has symbolised "a new boundary marker for extremism" (Billig 1978: 348).

Finally, the brief examination of readers' perception of this coverage has indicated the ways in which the press can be most effective in conveying an anti-NF stance. This can best be achieved not by the censorship or suppression of NF-news but by highlighting the Nazi and violent image of the party and diffusing this through the wider public⁽⁷⁾. In sharp contrast to the recommendations of both the NUJ and Campaign Against Racism in the Media (CARM), the local press is particularly reticent to adopt this strategy. Instead, these papers are seen to "report all the parties in the same way". We would contend that this is unlikely to discourage people from voting for the NF in future local and parliamentary elections. On the contrary, by treating the Front as equivalent to other parties these papers confer credibility on its racist politics and help to perpetuate the erroneous and dangerous myth that the NF is a legitimate and respectable participant in the British body-politic.

Footnotes

1. An earlier version of this article was presented to the SSRC-funded conference on Right Wing Politics in Western Europe held at the London School of Economics and Political Science, 22nd-23rd June, 1979.
2. This was at the Parliamentary by-election at West Bromwich in May 1973 where the NF candidate, Martin Webster, polled 4,789 votes; that is, 16 per cent of the total vote.
3. This is part of a wider study of the role of the media in the development of racial attitudes and sympathy for the NF amongst white adults in Leicester and Manchester. The study is supported by the Commission for Racial Equality and carried out at the Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester.
4. As defined either explicitly or implicitly by the newspapers themselves.
5. This article was subsequently posted on the window of NF campaign headquarters at Ladywood, Birmingham.
6. It has not been possible here to discuss coverage of the NF and race on either television or radio. However, for a brief account of the BBC and the NF see Tracey and Troyna (1979), while coverage of the NF on local radio is considered *inter alia*, in Troyna (forthcoming (b)).
7. The clearest examples of this practice were in the News of the World ('Down Among the Nasties': 25th April 1976) and the Daily Mirror ('I See the NF Hate Machine at Work': 14th July 1976).

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